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Korea's Appeal for Self-Determination

**By an
American Born in Korea**

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THE KOREAN APPEAL FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

By J. E. MOORE,

An American born in Korea.

Korea has once more come before the eyes of the world. On March 1st, 1919, began what has been described as "the most wonderful passive resistance movement in history". The Korean National Independence Union, composed of three million people and representing the voice of twenty millions, declared the independence of Korea, while the Korean National Council at Nikolshoe, in Siberia, transmitted the declaration to all consulates thruout the world.

"It is our solemn duty," states the declaration, "to secure the right of free and perpetual development of our own national character, adapting ourselves to the principles of the reconstruction of the world—to secure our independence, to wipe out injuries, get rid of our present sufferings, and leave our children eternal freedom, instead of a bitter and shameful inheritance." The Independence Union and the Korean National Association abroad have elected delegates to the Peace Conference, one of whom is already in Paris. Every telegram that arrives brings fresh news of the rapidly spreading movement, which is declared to be remarkable for its

extent, now embracing almost the entire country and all Korean organizations abroad. All representative bodies of Koreans are represented, and all leaders of Korean thought and activity are involved. No such movement has stirred Korea in years.

The Japanese, as might be expected, have replied with force and cruelty. An early telegram reported that 500 had been killed and a more recent one states that ten thousand were killed in two days. Thousands are reported to have been thrown into prison and many subjected to inhuman treatment. A little girl, it is said, who held up a copy of the declaration in her hands had her arms severed. Japanese soldiers are said to be coming in from Japan, and the dread spectre of wholesale slaughters and terrorism, such as followed the days of early Japanese occupation, looms over the land.

Something must be done. The enlightened sentiment of the world must be aroused to stay the outburst of fury and cruelty which seems about to fall on Christians and innocent people throughout the peninsula and to see that the Korean appeal at Paris gets a fair hearing.

The Korean revolution has called for a restatement of the Korean problem in the light of new-world conditions. The writer, an American born in Korea who has seen Japanese rule there, with his own eyes, whose blood has boiled at the outrages he has seen Japanese perpetrate on innocent and inoffensive Koreans, who knows the Koreans and understands them, has endeavored, upon request, to give in a brief way such a statement.

In the first place. **Korea is justified in her claims.** The principles upon which the right of self-determination rest have never applied more directly to any subject nation than they do to Korea. She is a distinct race—the most homogeneous, perhaps, in the world. She has existed as a distinct government for centuries. She was robbed of her sovereignty. The old argument, which the pro-Japanese never tire of bringing up, that the old Korean government was more or less inefficient and corrupt and that Korea is better off under Japanese rule, which the writer does not concede, even if granted, does not affect the point in question. Germany, in efficiency, may have far surpassed Belgium, but the world did not for that reason justify her in robbing and Prussianizing Belgium. The South argued that slaves were better off as slaves than as free negroes. Because my neighbor is more efficient in the management of his household than I am is no reason why he should come in and rob me of my home. Nor is there any more relevancy to the argument that Japan needs Korea as an outlet for her congested population. Because Germany affirmed that she needed an outlet for hers, did we justify her in seizing Belgium or in opening a way to the Mediterranean by trampling on her neighbors? And, finally, let us not forget that the terrible war which has just been fought, if it is to mean anything—if all the precious lives that have been sacrificed have not been sacrificed in vain—has brot us a day when the world is safe for democracy, when all peoples shall have the right of self-determina-

tion and self-expression. If our soldiers have purchased these rights for the world with their blood, then Korea is justified in her claims.

In the second place, Japan's course in Korea has been marked thruout with injustice and oppression. Had she endeavored to win the friendship and good-will of the Korean people, had her real effort been to uplift and benefit and reconstruct Korean society and government, the case would be different. But this is not the case. Japan's policy in Korea has been from the start one which has aimed to crush the spirit of the Korean, to stamp out all national consciousness, to reduce the Korean people to the status of a subject race.

Now let us review briefly the steps which Japan has taken to accomplish this end. And first let us look at the known facts, which are familiar to the world.

I. Japan robbed Korea of her independence. This has long since become history, but that does not relieve it of its heinousness nor its injustice. The Korean revolution, moreover, has brought up the skeleton from its burial place and set it once more in the light. In 1904 Korea, in a treaty with Japan, conceded to her the use of the peninsula for the prosecution of the war, with the understanding that when the war was over Korea was to regain her full independence. About a year later, with the country helpless in their grip, and all military facilities were in their hand and the country was full of Japanese soldiers, Prince Ito, with a detachment of soldiers, compelled the Korean cabinet, at the point of the gun, to ced

Korean independence, while the Japanese proceeded to inform the world that Korea had voluntarily given itself over to the "protectorate" of Japan.

II. Japan's occupation of Korea during the war and following her virtual annexation was attended with cruelty, oppression and violence, which can only be compared to the conduct of Germany in Belgium. It was a common sight to see helpless women insulted by soldiers or innocent Koreans assaulted in the streets by Japanese. Theft, treachery and confiscation were the order of the day. Turned out of house and home, beaten, outraged, killed, deprived of the very means of livelihood—words are not available to describe the plight of the people under conditions of which the writer was a witness.

In the summer of 1907, in response to the uprising of a few patriots, the Japanese policy culminated in a campaign which a writer traveling in the country at the time declared to be "one of the most cruel and odious campaigns ever conducted in this generation in the name of civilization." Innocent people were slaughtered wholesale, scores of villages completely demolished, women outraged, wounded and bayoneted, and children shot, simply because the rebels had fought near their homes.

Japanese rule in the peninsula then settled into that of a military regime which continued to subject the people to oppression and violence. Men were thrown into jail and tortured on trumped-up charges. Innocent men were banished or sentenced to years at penal servitude, churches were entered and meetings broken up, with no reason

whatsoever. There was little guarantee to the Korean for life, liberty or prosperity, and still less for justice. With land, fisheries, trade, banks and, in short, all the facilities for livelihood in the hands of their conquerors, the already impoverished people were forced to make a harder fight than ever for an existence.

Under the civil rule of Marquis Ito, it is true, the Koreans had enjoyed a brief respite, but under the again predominantly military policy of Terauchi which followed the assassination of Prince Ito, the Koreans were subjected to a regime which can only be characterized as a reign of terror. In 1912 the church became the special victim of an unusually ferocious outburst. In different parts of the country large numbers of Korean pastors and Christian leaders were arrested and subjected to terrible tortures, while the churches and Christians at large were kept in a constant ferment by the indignities and the show of frightfulness which the Japanese gendarmere continually brandished over them. The famous Conspiracy Case in which some one hundred and twenty Christian leaders were tried on the ludicrous charge of conspiring to take the life of the Governor-General, attracted the attention of the world. The frightful treatment accorded these men is common information. The skill with which Japan covered up the outburst of indignation which ensued and succeeded in soon reassuring the world that the purpose of Japan was benevolent and that the Koreans were immeasurably better off under Japanese rule than

they ever had been before is amazing. All the above facts are known.

Now let us glance at the unknown facts of that policy by which Japan has aimed to cow the Koreans, to reduce them to the serfdom of a people which may only serve as hewers of wood and drawers of water, to amalgamate, absorb, to utterly swallow up everything that is distinctively Korean. These facts have been compiled from the statements of men of indisputable veracity, who have recently returned from Korea.

I. A veil of secrecy has been drawn over the inner condition of the Korean people. By isolating Korea from the world; by forbidding Koreans to leave the country; by instigating a rigid censorship; by turning over visitors and tourists to pro-Japanese residents or Japanese of prominence, to be toasted and feted and decorated; by sending out the libraries of the world and to great men propaganda reports and literature, which the material reforms of Korea were constantly held up and the true conditions of the people misrepresented, the Japanese have succeeded in making the world believe that, whatever mistakes may have been previously made, the present condition is ideal and the Koreans reconciled to Japanese rule.

II. A rigid spy system has been inaugurated. Everyone must be registered and is given a number, which is known to the police. Every time he leaves his village or town he must register at the police station and state fully the business he intends to transact and his destination. The policeman phones to this

place and if his actions are in any way at variance with his report he is liable to arrest and mistreatment. A strict classification is kept on the basis of a man's education, influence, position, etc. As soon as a man begins to show ability or qualities of leadership he is put in class "a," detectives are set on his trail and from thenceforth he becomes a marked man, hounded wherever he goes. Even children are watched or bribed for information. If a man escapes the country his number is traced, his family or relatives arrested and perchance tortured until they reveal his whereabouts. A man is likely to disappear any day and perhaps not be heard of again. It is a very efficient Prussianism which thus aims to crush the spirit of a people.

III. This policy is carried out in the educational system by forbidding the teaching of Korean history or geography; by permitting only teachers who can speak Japanese, only text-books published by the Japanese government, only branches of instruction which are utilitarian and do not develop mental scope or power; by excluding all European history or literature or any subject, in fact, which might lead to such a personal culture; by discouraging and practically depriving Korean students of the right of higher education; by forbidding a Korean student to go abroad for education; in fact, by forbidding them to leave the country; by ordering the worship of the Emperor's tablet and picture; by compelling them to celebrate Japanese holidays and prodding them into demonstrations of Japanese patriotism; by forbidding them to entertain

express Korean ideas or aspirations. One student was put in jail for three months and fined three hundred dollars because he was caught singing the Korean national anthem. If there is any right sacred to the human heart, it is that of freedom of thought and education. Can we blame a people subjected to this mental and spiritual slavery for arising and appealing to the world for self-determination?

IV. This policy is carried out in religion by forbidding pastors to preach without a license from the Japanese government; by forbidding any religious meeting or gathering to be held without a special permit; by forbidding the teaching of the Bible, even in many mission schools; by forcing students in the government schools to work on Sunday; by forcing Koreans to clean their houses and yards on Sunday, so that the Christians shall be compelled to break the Sabbath; by commanding all to bow to the Emperor's portrait; by having detectives in every church service, who arrest pastors for showing emotion or using strong expressions in their sermons or being too earnest in their prayers. This repression has gone to such limits that one pastor was arrested for preaching on the Kingdom of God instead of the Kingdom of Japan. At one time the hymn, "I Am an Ambassador for the King," was suppressed because it contained seditious sentiments. Propaganda has even been known to have been instituted to undermine the faith of the Christians. The Japanese fear and dislike Christianity in Korea because it contains the seeds of liberty and democracy, and hence this repression and this oppres-

sion, which makes the church the victim of so unjust a surveillance and makes Christian leaders constantly liable to arrest, banishment or even worse fates.

V. This policy is carried out in the social sphere by undermining the public morality. Shortly after annexation the Japanese government permitted Japanese agents to travel thru the country selling morphia and developing the morphine habit among the Koreans. Then came the prostitutes. Today there are thousands of prostitutes brot over from Japan, who are innoculating Korean society with those terrible evils of social vice for which Japan as a race is almost proverbial. There are the public baths which the Japanese have instituted, where bathing is promiscuous. To Korean modesty and Korean standards of virtue this is a serious menace and will have on the growing generation far-reaching consequences. Between prostitution, public baths and gambling old Korean ideals stand in great peril.

VI. This policy is carried out in civic life in many ways. Everywhere there is suppression and repression. No gatherings of any kind, social or otherwise, where more than five people are to be present, can be held without special permits. Practically all Korean publications of any kind are suppressed. A Korean who dares to breath ideas which show independence of thot or initiative is courting a dark fate, and no Korean may hope to hold high office. Economically the Korean is reduced to an industrial serfdom, as all rights to develop the resources of his country are given to Japanese, and such preferential treatment is accorded the Japanese mer-

chant that it is a hopeless battle for the Korean tradesman. Exploitation is still common. People are not uncommonly forced to work on railroads or public roads without pay, being told that the roads are being built for their use and therefore their work should be voluntary. Justice is still a by-word, and the wrongs suffered by Koreans in the courts, where they are said to be judged by a far more harsh system of laws than the Japanese, is a heart-rending tale. Abuse and violent treatment is still not uncommon, and especially is this said to be true in the small towns and villages, where the Japanese police has the life and liberty of every Korean in his hand and where he can exploit and abuse the humble country folk without arousing attention.

In the third place, then, Korea's present condition under Japan is insufferable. A journalist recently in Korea has described Japan's policy there at present as characterized by force rather than persuasion, by repression, by an "official terrorism which covers up abuses and ruthlessly represses public opinion or free expression of discontent," as one which rules over "a subject population, deprived of primary civil and political rights, unable to express disapproval, repressed and silent." And this is a very mild statement of a situation which in reality is far worse. Exploited, hounded, oppressed, deprived of the most sacred rights, without freedom of thought or expression or religion, deprived almost every channel of self-development and self-assertion, deprived of many of the means of subsistence, reduced to industrial as well as

political serfdom, liable to imprisonment or banishment or worse fates, compelled to see their children educated in a manner that is in accord neither with their wills nor their consciences, their young men subjected to corrupting and morally perilous influences, constantly subjected to the painful consciousness that they are a subject race, contemned and despised by their conquerors—is it any wonder that Korea is seeking the right of self-determination?

In the fourth place, Korea is capable of self-government. As has already been stated, Korea has been for centuries a self-governing nation. The shadowy suzerainty which China exercised can scarcely be characterized as even a protectorate. Aside from the nominal payment of tribute, Korea was left to herself, and to all intents and purposes has been a self-governing nation for hundreds of years. Now the argument that the old Korean government was effete is not only irrelevant, because it in no way affects Korea's right to independence, but also because it disregards the fact that should Korea be granted self-determination her new government would be modeled along democratic lines. Korea's cry is for the right of self-expression and self-development. This opportunity they have never had. Free from the incubus of the old Chinese civilization, which was thrust upon her at that early time in her history when Korea was about to start out on a career of independent thought and achievement, which would have made her the foremost nation of the East, and also free from the tyrant rule of Japan, she would have an opportunity for the first

time since the sixth century, of self-expression and self-development. In spite of the rigid spy system of the Japanese, hundreds of students have managed to get away for education abroad, who have there absorbed democratic ideals of government. There are, moreover, large numbers of graduates from institutions of higher learning in Korea and also large numbers of Koreans of the older generation who are men of wide culture and large attainments. Not only these leaders and potential leaders, but the people at large, thru their long suffering from misrule, have become thru this painful process keenly alive to the necessity for representative government and to a knowledge of what lines that government should follow. The Korean declaration states that the self-expression and development they seek is to be along the lines of "the principles of the reconstruction of the world." A great authority on Korea has stated that "Intrinsically and potentially the Korean is a man of high intellectual possibilities—give him a chance to develop independently and naturally, and you would have as good a brain as the Far East has to offer." But he has never had this opportunity. The golden hour has come. Shall we deny to this people the right which has been so long withheld to them?

Finally, the coming of the new world conditions and the league of nations removes the last obstacle to granting Korea self-determination. The big argument of the Japanese has been that Korea is a weak nation; that she is subject to encroachment from China on the one hand and from Russia on the

other; that this is a peril to Japan and that Korea must therefore have a protector. Now, in the first place, China has become a republic with strong democratic and socialistic leanings and those aggressive tendencies which characterized her old imperialism have disappeared and this may even more be said to be true of Russia. In the second place, China, which has also suffered great wrongs from Japanese imperialism and militarism, is in heart-felt sympathy with the Koreans in their national aspirations. Any talk of aggression on the part of China is sheer folly. Russia also, in the light of the new conditions which the war has brot, may also be safely put out of consideration. But in the third place, even tho these arguments be set aside, **the principles for which the war has been fought,** demand that every distinct race have the right of self-government and self-development and **the outcome of the war has made this possible.** The war has done away with the rule of might and militarism and the day has passed when small and weak nations were the prey of stronger neighbors. If there was anything for which the great world war was fought it was this: to free the world from the curse of military greed. The League of Nations, moreover, stands to conserve the results of the war. It is a great police force which stands ready to see **that those rights for which so many lives have been sacrificed shall be respected.** Under the protection of this league, or such a member of the league as the Koreans should choose, all danger of outside aggression would be removed and the Koreans

could go ahead in peace and security with the prosecution of self-direction, self-education, self-development, self-government.

In conclusion, we have seen that Korea is entitled to the claim of self-determination, that Japan's course in Korea has been marked thruout with oppression and injustice, even with cruelty and violence, that she has aimed to crush the spirit of the Koreans and to reduce them to industrial serfdom, that, in the words of an American not long ago in Korea: "Korea has been Prussianized." We have also seen that Korea's present condition under Japan is insufferable, that Korea must be freed from her grip, that Korea is capable of self-government and that under the new world conditions there are no reasons which stand in the way of her being given self-determination.

The Korean appeal for self-government and the cruelty with which Japan is suppressing this movement in which the whole nation is taking part cries out to the world!

The enlightened sentiment of America should see to it, first, that humane and just treatment be accorded the leaders of the Korean movement, and, second, that the Korean appeal for self-determination gets a fair hearing at Paris.

(Clipping from editorial page of the New York American, March 20, 1919.)

HOW ABOUT KOREAN DEMOCRACY BEING MADE SAFE IN THE WORLD?

We reproduce the following dispatch in full, because it is well worth reading, even a second time:

PEKING, March 12 (Associated Press).—The independence movement in Korea is spreading, according to reports from private sources in that country. Trouble was anticipated at the funeral of Prince Yi, and the Japanese called in gendarmerie from outlying stations. The Korean national leaders arranged the Independence Day demonstrations two days earlier, thus catching the Japanese unprepared.

Eventually the situation was restored, but not before thousands had been arrested.

The Korean independence manifesto, dignified in tone, calls upon the people to rise and make a peaceful demonstration of independence, but under no circumstances to use force.

Students of the Ping-Yang Presbyterian Theological School were seized, stripped and tied to rough wooden crosses, which they were obliged to carry through the city, their Japanese captors saying that as their fathers bore the cross, they, too, should have the privilege of bearing it.

The Koreans demand that Japan's advisory control continue only until

the League of Nations considers the Koreans fit for self-government.

And here is another dispatch from the same source on the same subject, cabled the following day:

PEKING, March 13 (Associated Press).—The leaders of the Korean independence movement have arrived in Peking and assert that it is national, with three million supporters, including the Christians, Buddhists, Heaven Worshipers and nearly all the students. They do not countenance force, but rely upon appeals to the generosity of Western nations.

There is widespread unrest in Korea, these leaders say, 10,000 persons having been arrested already, and Japanese statements to the contrary are false.

They complain of Japanese mistreatment. In one case a girl who took part in an independence demonstration was holding a manifesto in one hand when a Japanese soldier cut the hand off with a sword. She raised her other hand and that was also cut off. Korean prisoners are tortured in Japanese prisons, it is declared.

The leaders assert that the Korean independence movement is affecting the entire Orient, and express the belief that the Peace Conference cannot ignore it.

It is announced here that the secret treaties between China and Japan will be published on Friday.

The independence and neutrality of Korea were violated by Japan as ruth-

lessly and as indefensibly as were the independence and neutrality of Belgium.

All the atrocities of which Germans are accused in Belgium are small, indeed, in comparison with the actual murders, outrages and savage barbarities inflicted upon the innocent people of Korea by their Japanese conquerors.

Yet the very same Americans who worked themselves up into frenzies of rage and pity over Belgium have never even taken notice of Japan's savage treatment of Korea—and some of them have actually aided Japanese propagandists, like the hired agent, Dr. Iyenaga, to deny or to explain away the black record of conquest, tyranny and outrage.

What does all this fine talk about making the world safe for democracy really amount to, so long as poor, helpless Korea is ground under the heel of Japanese autocracy without even a protest coming from any Government, including our own?

Why, it amounts to talk, that's all—just piffle—hypocritical, sniffling, pious piffle.

And then some people profess to wonder why distrust and unrest and even revolution are still in evidence among the plain people of all nations.

(San Diego Union, editorial, March 14 1919.)

KOREA'S APPEAL.

The league of nations department of the peace conference is likely to have Korea on its hands. The Koreans are preparing to present their claims for independence.

ence to the league, and if the principle involved in President Wilson's declaration that the world must be made safe for democracy is strictly adhered to by the governing powers, the petition of Korea must be considered upon precisely the same basis as those of Poland, Jugoslavia, Czecho-Slovakia and Ireland.

The claims of Korea are even better than those of the Slovaks, resting, as they do, on the historical grounds that support the independence of Poland, namely, that they are a distinct race, that they have existed as a distinct government, and that their sovereignty was taken from them.

The Koreans are a homogeneous people; more homogeneous, perhaps, than any other race except the Jews. As a people they are so old that the record of their origin is lost in the mists of the remotest antiquity. Their general features indicate a Mongol strain, and their language belongs to the so-called Turanian group, which includes the Finnish and the Tartar, a primary linguistic family. They are quickly intelligent, but lack force and the mental caliber necessary to oppose the aggressions of their warlike neighbors. Their country has an area of 82,000 square miles, and a population variously estimated between 12,000,000 and 17,000,000.

A weakling king gave control of his government to the Japanese in 1905, who have since greatly enlarged their "protectorate," until to all intents and practical purposes Korea is a Japanese province.

The Koreans have always resented the Japanese suzerainty, although for many centuries they were content to live under

the benevolent administration of resident Chinese "advisers."

All they ask in this petition to the great powers of the earth is the privilege of governing themselves as far as they are able, submitting to the direction of the league council in all matters beyond their capacity. What they most strenuously object to is the personal supervision of a single government with power, if there is disposition to exercise it, to exploit their resources and to oppress the people. In brief, they do not wish to be an appendage of Japan.

When the league of nations is organized, it will, unquestionably, give Korea as full measure of independence as they can compass intelligently and efficiently. When the Japanese assumed control of Korean affairs it was in accord with the necessity of a sort of Asiatic Monroe Doctrine. Korea was a weak state which already had been the ostensible cause of a war between Japan and Russia, upon precisely the same conditions that would result if a foreign power should infringe upon American policy by taking possession of the island of Cuba. Japan could not afford to allow such a close neighbor a sovereignty which could be bartered to a potential foe of the island empire.

By the covenant of the league now in process of negotiation this peril to Japanese national integrity will be entirely removed, and the way will be left open for such "self-determination" by the Koreans as the rest of the world represented in the league of nations may see fit, in justice and humanity, to grant to this gentle, peace-loving, industrious, virtually helpless people.

"THE SONG OF THE DEFEATED."

My Master has asked of me to stand at
the roadside of retreat and sing the song
of the Defeated,

For she is the bride whom He woos in
secret.

She has put on the dark veil, hiding her
face from the crowd, the fewel glowing
in her breast in the dark.

She is forsaken of the day, and God's
light is waiting for her with its lamps
lighted and flowers wet with dew.

She is silent with her eyes downcast;
he has left her home behind her, from
where comes the wailing in the wind.

But the stars are singing the love song
of the eternal to her whose face is sweet
with shame and suffering.

The door has been opened in the lonely
chamber, the call has come;

And the heart of the darkness throbs
with the awe of the expectant tryst.

—Rabindranath Tagore.

(This poem is written on Korea by the famous
Hindu poet and teacher upon the request of Mr.
Choy Nam Sun, the persistent Korean publicist
and leader among Koreans. Mr. Tagore shows
through this poem undoubtedly his heart-felt sym-
pathy to Korea, as well as his keen insight into
the real situation of her, in shame and in dis-
grace.)

